

FINDINGS: Serious religious freedom abuses continue in Somalia. These violations are the result of: an on-going conflict with a strong sectarian nature; the implementation of a strict interpretation of Islamic law reminiscent of the Taliban, under which practices deemed “un-Islamic” are repressed, Sufi clerics and non-Muslims are killed, and Sufi religious sites are desecrated; and an increase in manifestations of radical interpretations of Islam and growth of extremist Islamic schools. The internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government (TFG) only controls a small area of the capital and does not have the capacity to enforce religious freedom protections or address religious freedom violations.

Based on these concerns, USCIRF again places Somalia on its Watch List for 2010. Somalia has been on the Commission’s Watch List since 2009.

Somalia has not had an effective, central government since the fall of former dictator Siad Barre in 1991. The ensuing civil war and continuing conflicts have destroyed all national governing structures. In the absence of the rule of law, freedom of religion or belief, like all other human rights, is undermined by insurgents, warlords, self-appointed officials, local authorities, and prevailing societal attitudes. Throughout 2009, the U.S.-designated “foreign terrorist organization” al-Shabaab (the Youth) and Hizbul Islam (Party of Islam) mounted an increasingly successful insurgency against the TFG. Despite efforts by the TFG to placate these groups, including by establishing sharia law as state law, the two militias continued to oppose the new government. A third Islamic militia, which finalized a cooperation agreement with the TFG in March 2010, Ahlu Sunna waa Jaama (ASWJ), also committed a small number of religious freedom violations.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS:□ The promotion of freedom of religion or belief is not adequately addressed in U.S.-Somalia policy, especially given the sectarian elements of the

conflict and the increasing manifestations of radical Islam. USCIRF understands the emphasis on providing security assistance to the TFG, which addresses significant U.S. national security concerns by helping the TFG exert control over Somalia to attempt to govern the country. However, radical interpretations of Islam continue to perpetuate severe violations of religious freedom and related human rights, as well as turn Somalia into a safe haven for terrorists. To address this phenomenon, USCIRF recommends that the U.S. government increase efforts to promote freedom of religion or belief in Somalia through support of civil society organizations and engagement with Somali government officials, clerics, elders, and diaspora communities as well as increase assistance to develop an education and rule of law sector in Somalia. Additional recommendations for U.S. policy towards Somalia can be found in the 2010 Annual Report chapter on Somalia.